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KANT AND PHILOSOPHIC METHOD.

BY JOHN DEWEY.

On its subjective side, so far as individuals are concerned, philosophy comes into existence when men are confronted with problems and contradictions which common sense and the special sciences are able neither to solve nor resolve. There is felt the need of going deeper into things, of not being content with haphazard views or opinions derived from this or that science, but of having some principle which, true on its account, may also serve to judge the truth of all besides. It is no matter of accident that modern philosophy begins, in Descartes, with a method which doubts all, that it may find that wherewith to judge all; nor is it meaningless that Kant, the founder of modernest philosophy, commences his first great work with a similar demand, and "calls upon Reason to undertake the most difficult of tasks, self-knowledge, and establish a tribunal to decide all questions according to its own eternal and unchangeable laws."¹ This self-knowledge of Reason, then, is the Method and criterion which Kant offers.

Before we may see what is involved in this, it is necessary to see what in gist the previous methods had been, and why they had failed. The method of "intellectualism" begun by Descartes and presented to Kant through Wolff was (in one word): Analysis of conceptions, with the law of identity or non-contradiction for criterion. To discover truth is to analyze the problem down to those simple elements which cannot be thought away, and reach a judgment whose predicate may be clearly and distinctly seen to be identical with its subject. Analytic thought, proceeding by the law of identity, gives the method for philosophic procedure. Now, Kant in his pre-critical period² had become convinced that analysis does not explain such a conception as that which we have of causation: "How one thing should arise out of another, when it is not connected with it, according to the law of identity, this is a

¹ See Kant's *Werke*, Rosenkranz's ed., vol. ii, p. 7.

² See especially his essay on attempt to introduce the idea of negative quantity into philosophy. *Werke*, vol. i.

thing which I should much like to have explained.”¹ Nor again, while it may be, and undoubtedly is, the method for pure thought, does it give any means for passing from thought to existence. This, he would say, is no predicate of anything; it is part of no conception, and can be got by no analysis. Reality is added to our notions from without, not evolved from them. But, if logical thought is not adequate to such notions as cause, nor able to reach existence, it can be no method for discovering Absolute truth.

So Kant finds himself thrown into the arms of the Empiricists. It is experience which shows us the origin of an effect in a cause, and experience which adds reality or existence to our thoughts. What, then, is the method of “Empiricism”? Beginning with Bacon, at first it merely asserted that the mind must be freed from all subjective elements, and become a mirror, to reflect the world of reality. But this, as criterion, is purely negative, and required the positive complement of Locke. This method in a word is, *Analysis of perceptions with agreement as criterion*. In contrast with the intellectual school, which began with conceptions supposed to be found ready-made in the human mind, it begins with the perceptions impressed upon that blank tablet, the Mind, by external objects, and finds “knowledge to consist in the perception of the connection or agreement or disagreement of these ideas.” But two questions arise: If truth or knowledge consists in perceptions, how, any more than from conceptions, shall we get to an external world? This question was answered by Berkeley in showing that, if knowledge were what this theory made it to be, the external world was just that whose *esse* is *percipi*. The second question is: What is agreement of perception? Agreement certainly means, as Locke said, “connexion,” that is, mutual reference, or Synthesis. But how can this synthesis occur? The mind is a blank, a wax tablet, a *tubula rasa*, whose sole nature is receptivity, and certainly it can furnish no synthesis. Locke had avoided the difficulty by assuming that ideas come to us or are “given” more or less conjoined—that one has naturally some bond of union with another. But this, of course, cannot be. Simple impressions or perceptions are, as Hume stated, such as admit of no distinction or separation, and these are the ultimate

¹ Ibid., p. 157.

sensations. These have no connection with each other, except perhaps the accidental one of following or occurring together in time, and so it is that "every distinct perception is a separate existence." Necessary connection among them, therefore, there can be none. Sensations are purely contingent, accidental, and external in their relations to each other, with no bonds of union. Any agreement is the result of chance or blind custom. Knowledge as the necessary connection of perceptions does not exist.

Kant consequently discovers, by a more thorough study of empiricism, that it too betrays him. It, no more than his former guides, can furnish him with a way of getting to an external world nor to knowledge at all. Nay, even self, some ghost of which was left him by the other method, has disappeared too.

What has been the difficulty? Descartes did not come to a stand-still at once, for he had tacitly presupposed the synthetic power of thought in itself—had even laid the ground for a theory of it in his reference to the Ego, or self-consciousness. But his successors, neglecting this, and developing only the analytic aspect of thought, had produced a vacuum, where no step to existence or actual relations, being synthetic, could be taken. "Conceptions are empty." Nor had Locke been estopped immediately, for he presupposed some synthesis in the objective world; but it turns out that he had no right to it, and world, self, and all actual relations, being synthetic, have gone. "Perceptions are blind." The problem, then, is clearly before Kant, as is the key to its solution. Synthesis is the *sine qua non*. Knowledge is synthesis, and the explanation of knowledge or truth must be found in the explanation of synthesis. Hence the question of Method is now the question: How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible? *A priori* means simply belonging to Reason in its own nature, so the question is, How and to what extent is Reason the source of synthesis?

The case stands thus: Pure thought is purely analytic; experience *per se* gives only a blind rhapsody of particulars, without meaning or connection—actual experience, or knowledge involves, *is* synthesis. How shall it be got? One path remains open. We may suppose that while thought *in itself* is analytic, it is synthetic when applied to a material given it, and that from this material, by its functions, it forms the objects which it knows. And such, in its lowest terms, is the contribution Kant makes. The material,

the manifold, the particulars, are furnished by Sense in perception; the conceptions, the synthetic functions from Reason itself, and the union of these two elements are required, as well for the formation of the object known, as for its knowing.

To characterize Kant's contribution to Method, it remains to briefly examine these two sides of his theory: First, for the part played by the synthetic functions or the categories. These, in first intention, are so many conceptions of the understanding, and, as such, subject to analysis according to the law of identity, and thus furnish the subject-matter of Logic. But they also have relation to objects, and, as such, are synthetic and furnish the subject-matter of Transcendental Logic, whose work is to demonstrate and explain their objective validity. This is done by showing that "the categories make experience and its objects for the first time possible." That is to say, Kant, after showing that the principles of identity and contradiction, though the highest criteria of logical thought, can give no aid in determining the truths of actual experience, inquires what is the criterion of truth for the latter, or what comes to the same thing, of the synthetic use of the categories as Transcendental Logic—and the answer he finds to be "possible experience" itself. In other words, the categories have objective validity or synthetic use because without them no experience would be possible. If Hume, for example, asks how we can have assurance that the notion of causality has any worth when applied to objects, he is answered by showing that without this notion experience as an intelligible connected system would not exist. By the categories the objects of experience are constituted, and hence their objective validity.

It follows, accordingly, that the system of experience may be determined, as to its form, by a completely made out system of categories. In them, as synthetic functions, constituting experience, we find the criterion of truth. But they themselves have a higher condition. As synthetic functions, they must all be functions of a higher unity which is subject to none of them. And this Kant calls the synthetic *unity* of Apperception or, in brief, self-consciousness. This is the highest condition of experience, and in the developed notion of self-consciousness we find the criterion of truth. The theory of self-consciousness is Method.

But this abstract statement must be farther developed. It

comes to saying, on the one hand, that the criterion of the categories is possible experience, and on the other, that the criterion of possible experience is the categories and their supreme condition. This is evidently a circle, yet a circle which, Kant would say, exists in the case itself, which expresses the very nature of knowledge. It but states that in knowledge there is naught but knowledge which knows or is known—the only judge of knowledge, of experience, is experience itself. And experience is a system, a real whole made up of real parts. It as a whole is necessarily implied in every fact of experience, while it is constituted in and through these facts. In other terms, the relation of categories to experience is the relation of members of an organism to a whole. The criterion of knowledge is neither anything outside of knowledge, nor a particular conception within the sphere of knowledge which is not subject to the system as a whole; it is just this system which is constituted, so far as its form is concerned, by the categories.

Philosophic Method, or the discovering of the criterion of truth, will consist, then, in no setting up of a transcendent object as the empiricists did, or of an abstract principle after the manner of the intellectual school. Since the categories, in and through self-consciousness, constitute experience, Method will consist in making out a complete table of these categories in all their mutual relations, giving each its proper placing, with the full confidence that when so placed each will have its proper place in experience, *i. e.*, its capacity for expressing reality determined.

But we have now strayed far from Kant. While having said nothing which is not deducible from his *Transcendental Logic*, we have abstracted from the fact that this holds only of the *form* of our knowledge; that there is also an *æsthetic*, and that thought is synthetic, not in itself, but only upon a material supplied to it from without. Turning to this, we find the aspect of affairs changed. Though the categories make experience, they make it out of a foreign material to which they bear a purely external relation. They constitute objects, but these objects are not such in universal reference, but only to beings of like capacities of receptivity as ourselves. They respect not existence in itself, but ourselves as *affected* by that existence. The system of categories furnishes the criterion for all the knowledge we have, but this

turns out to be no real knowledge. It is, Hegel says, as if one ascribed correct insight to a person, and then added that he could see only into the untruth, not the truth. Nor does the deficiency of our method end here. We had previously assumed that the categories as a system, or in their organic relation to self-consciousness, could be known. But it now turns out that nothing can be known except that to which this feeling of external matter through sensibility is given. To know this subject, or self-consciousness, is to make an object of it, and every object is sensible, that is, has a feeling which tells us how we are affected. But such a knowledge is evidently no knowledge of self-consciousness in its own nature. Thus, so far as knowledge is concerned, it must remain a bare form of self-identity, of " $I = I$," into definite organic relations with which the categories can never be brought. Hence, it appears that our picture of a method was doubly false—false in that after all it could not reach truth; false in that after all no such method was in itself possible. Our organic system of categories cannot constitute absolute truth—and no such organic system is itself knowable. Criterion and method we are still without. The golden prize, which seemed just within our hands as long as we confined ourselves to the Transcendental Logic, turns out to be a tinsel superfluity.

Yet, none the less, there was the suggestion of a method there, which is exactly what we wish. The only question is: Is its reference to the *Æsthetic* necessary? Is the latter a necessary part of Kant's theory, or, so far as it concerns the reception of external matter, an excrescence? The question is just here: Previous methods failed because they made no allowance for synthesis—Kant's because the synthesis can occur only upon matter foreign to it. Thought in the previous theories was *purely* analytic; in Kant's it is *purely* synthetic, in that it is synthesis of foreign material. Were thought at once synthetic *and* analytic, differentiating and integrating in its own nature, both affirmative and negative, relating to self at the same time that it related to other—indeed, through this relation to other—the difficulty would not have arisen.

Is the state of the case as Kant supposes? Must we say that Reason is synthetic only upon condition that material be given it to act upon, or, may it be, that while we must say that for the in-

dividual the material, nay, the form as indissolubly connected with the material, is given, yet, to Reason itself, nothing is given in the sense of being foreign to it?

A slight examination will show us that, at least as far as Kant is concerned, the former supposition is but an arbitrary limitation or assumption, which Kant imposed upon himself, or received without question from previous philosophy. On one side, he had learned that pure thought is analytic; on the other, that the individual is affected with sensations impressed upon it by external objects. At the same time that he corrects both of these doctrines with his own deduction of the categories, he formally retains both errors.

So we have him asking at the very outset, as a matter of course: "In what other way is it to be conceived that the knowing power can be excited to activity, except by objects which affect our senses?" That is to say, he assumes at the outset that there is something external to Reason by which it must be excited. He perceives, what all admit, that an individual organized in a certain specific way with certain senses, and external things acting upon these senses, are conditions to our knowledge, and then proceeds to identify respectively this individual with the subject, and these things with the object, in the process of knowledge. But here it is that we ask with what right does he make this identification. If it is made, then surely the case stands with Reason as he says it does—it acts only upon a material foreign to it. Yet this individual and these things are but known objects already constituted by the categories, and existing only for the synthetic unity of apperception or self-consciousness. This, then, is the real subject, and the so-called subject and object are but the forms in which it expresses its own activity. In short, the relation of subject and object is not a "transcendent" one, but an "immanent," and is but the first form in which Reason manifests that it is both synthetic and analytic; that it separates itself from itself, that it may thereby reach higher unity with itself. It is the highest type of the law which Reason follows everywhere. The material which was supposed to confront Reason as foreign to it is but the manifestation of Reason itself. Such, at least, are the results which we reach in the Transcendental Deduction, and such are the results we consider ourselves justified to keep in opposition to Kant's pure assumptions.

[We see the same thing in Kant's theory of phenomenon. Just as, concerning the process of knowledge, he assumes that subject and object are in external relation to each other, and hence Reason in contact with a foreign material, so here he assumes that the character of phenomenality consists in relation to an unknowable noumenon. The phenomenon is referred to something outside of experience, instead of being defined by its relation within experience—in which case it would be seen to be a phenomenon in its own nature, in that the categories which constitute it as such are not adequate to truth.

We have but to turn to Kant's derivation of the categories, to be again assured that Kant's theory of Reason as synthetic only in reference to foreign material is one purely assumed. As is notorious, these he took from the Logic of the School, which he held to give a complete table of all the forms of pure thought. When we turn to this table we find the highest point reached in it to be reciprocity. Now, reciprocity is precisely that external relation of two things to each other that we have already found existing, in Kant's theory, between subject and object in Knowledge—the relations of things that are independent of each other but mutually act upon each other. So, too, it is but another way of stating that Thought, analytic in itself, is synthetic when applied to an external material, or that this material, blind and haphazard in itself, is formed by something acting upon it. When Kant tells us, therefore, that the categories are not limited in their own nature, but become so when applied, as they must be, to determine space and time, we have in our hands the means of correcting him. They are limited, and express just the limitation of Kant himself. And Kant confesses their insufficiency as soon as he takes up the questions of moral and æsthetic experience and of life itself. Here we find the categories of freedom determined by ends, free production, organism to be everywhere present, while all through his "*Critiques*" is woven in the notion of an intuitive understanding which is the ultimate criterion of all truth, and this understanding is just what we have already met as the organic system of experience or self-consciousness.

Whether we consider the relations of subject and object, or the nature of the categories, we find ourselves forced into the presence of the notion of organic relation. The relation between subject

and object is not an external one; it is one in a higher unity which is itself constituted by this relation. The only conception adequate to experience as a whole is organism. What is involved in the notion of organism? Why, precisely the Idea which we had formerly reached of a Reason which is both analytic and synthetic, a Reason which differentiates itself that it may integrate itself into fuller riches, a Reason that denies itself that it may become itself. Such a Reason, and neither an analytic Thought, nor an analytic Experience, nor a Reason which is analytic in itself, and synthetic for something else, is the ultimate criterion of truth, and the theory of this Reason is the Philosophic Method.

The two defects which we found before in Kant's theory now vanish. The method is no longer one which can reach untruth only, nor is it a method which cannot be made out. The track which we were upon in following the course of the Transcendental Deduction was the right one. The criterion of experience is the system of categories in their organic unity in self-consciousness, and the method consists in determining this system and the part each plays in constituting it. The method takes the totality of experience to pieces, and brings before us its conditions in their entirety. The relations of its content, through which alone this content has character and meaning, whereby it becomes an intelligible, connected whole, must be made to appear.

It was the suggestion of this method, it was the suggestion of so many means for its execution, it was the actual carrying of it out in so many points that makes Kant's "Philosophy" the *critical* philosophy, and his work the *crisis*, the separating, dividing, turning-point of modern philosophy, and this hurried sketch would not be complete if we did not briefly point out what steps have been taken toward the fulfilling of the Ideal. This is found chiefly in Hegel and his "Logic." We can only discuss in the light of what has already been said why Hegel begins with Logic; why the negative plays so important a part in his philosophy, and what is the meaning of Dialectic. (1.) Logic. One of Hegel's repeated charges against Kant is, that he examines the categories with reference to their *objective* character, and not to determine their own meaning and worth. At first it might seem as if this were the best way to determine their worth, but it ought now to be evident that such a procedure is both to presuppose that they are subject-

ive in themselves, and that we have a ready-made conception of object by which to judge them—in short, it amounts to saying that these conceptions are purely analytic, and have meaning only in relation to an external material. Hence the method must examine the categories without any reference to subjective or objective existences; or, to speak properly, since we now see that there are no purely subjective or objective existences, without any relation to things and thoughts as two distinct spheres. The antithesis between them is not to be blinked out of sight, but it must be treated as one which exists within Reason, and not one with one term in and the other out. The categories which, for the individual, determine the nature of the object, and those which state how the object is brought into the subjective form of cognition, must be deduced from Reason alone. A theory performing this task is what Hegel calls Logic, and is needed not only to overcome Kant's defects, but is immediately suggested by his positive accomplishments. In our account of the Transcendental Deduction we saw that self-consciousness was the supreme condition of all the categories, and hence can be subject in itself to none of them. When it is made subject we have no longer the absolute self-consciousness, but the empirical ego, the object of the inner sense. In short, the categories constitute the individuals as an object of experience, just as much as they do the material known. Hence they are no more subjective than objective. We may call them indifferently neither or both. The truth is, they belong to a sphere where the antithesis between subject and object is still potential, or *an sich*. It is evident, therefore, that logic, in the Hegelian use, is just that criterion of truth which we thought at first to find in Kant's transcendental Logic—it is an account of the conceptions or categories of Reason which constitute experience, internal and external, subjective and objective, and an account of them as a system, an organic unity in which each has its own place fixed. It is the completed Method of Philosophy.

(2.) The Negative in Hegel. It ought now to be evident that any Philosophy which can pretend to be a Method of Truth must show Reason as both Analytic *and* Synthetic. If History can demonstrate anything, it has demonstrated this, both by its successes and its failures. Reason must be that which separates itself, which differentiates, goes forth into differences, that it

may then grasp these differences into a unity of its own. It cannot unite unless there be difference; there can be no synthesis where there is not analysis. On the other hand, the differences must remain forever foreign to Reason unless it brings them together; there can be no analysis where there is not synthesis, or a unity to be dirempted. If there be no synthesis in Reason, we end in the impotence of the former school of intellectualism, or in the helpless scepticism of Hume; if Reason be synthetic only upon a foreign material, we end in the contradictions of Kant. If there is to be *knowledge*, Reason must include both elements within herself. It is Hegel's thorough recognition of this fact that causes him to lay such emphasis on the negative. Pure affirmation or identity reaches its summit in Spinoza, where all is lost in the infinite substance of infinite attributes, as waves in the sea. Yet even Spinoza was obliged to introduce the negative, the determinations, the modes, though he never could succeed in getting them by any means from his pure affirmation. In Hume we find pure difference or negation, the manifold particularization of sensations, but even he is obliged to introduce synthetic principles in the laws of association, though he never succeeds in legitimately deriving them from sensations, for a "consistent sensationalism is speechless." Kant had tried a compromise of the principle, synthesis from within, difference from without. That, too, failed to give us knowledge or a criterion of Truth. Hegel comprehends the problem, and offers us Reason affirmative *and* negative, and affirmative only in and through its own negations, as the solution.

(3.) Dialectic. We have now the notion of Dialectic before us in its essential features. We have seen that the desired object is a theory of the Conceptions of Reason in an organic system, and that Reason is itself both integrating and differentiating. Dialectic is the construction by Reason, through its successive differentiations and resumptions of these differences into higher unities, of just this system. If we take any single category of Reason—that is to say, some conception which we find involved in the system of experience—this is one specific form into which Reason has unified or "synthesized" itself. Reason itself is immanent in this category; but, since Reason is also differentiating or analytic, Reason must reveal itself as such in this category, which accordingly passes, or is reflected, or develops into its opposite, while the

two conceptions are then resumed into the higher unity of a more concrete conception.

Since the system of knowledge is implicit in each of its members, each category must judge itself, or rather, Reason, in its successive forms, passes judgment on its own inadequacy until the adequate is reached—and this can be nothing but Reason no longer implicit, but developed into its completed system. Reason must everywhere, and in all its forms, propose itself as what it is, viz., absolute or adequate to the entire truth of experience; but, since at first its *form* is still inadequate, it must show what is absolutely implicit in it, viz., the entire system. That at first it does, by doing what it is the nature of the Reason which it manifests to do, by differencing itself, or passing into its opposite, its other; but, since Reason is also synthetic, grasping together, these differences must resolve themselves into a higher unity. Thus, Reason continues until it has developed itself into the conception which is in form equal to what itself is in content, or, until it has manifested all that it is implicitly. A twofold process has occurred. On the one hand, each special form of Reason or Category has been placed; that is, its degree of ability to state absolute truth fixed by its place in the whole organic system. On the other, the system itself has been developed; that is to say, as Reason goes on manifesting its own nature through successive differences and unities, each lower category is not destroyed, but retained—but retained at its proper value. Each, since it is Reason, has its relative *truth*; but each, since Reason is not yet adequately manifested, has only a *relative* truth. The Idea is the completed category, and this has for its meaning or content Reason made explicit or manifested; that is, all the stages or types of Reason employed in reaching it. “The categories are not errors, which one goes through on the way to the truth, but phases of truth. Their completed system in its organic wholeness is *the* Truth.” And such a system is at once philosophic Method and Criterion; method, because it shows us not only the way to reach truth, but truth itself in construction; criterion, because it gives us the form of experience to which all the facts of experience as organic members must conform.

It will be seen, I hope, that we have not left our subject, “Kant’s Relation to Philosophic Method;” for a crisis is nothing in itself. It is a crisis only as it is the turning point; and a turning point is

the old passing into the new, and can be understood only as the old and the new are understood. The criterion of Kant is just this turning point; it is the transition of the old abstract thought, the old meaningless conception of experience, into the new concrete thought, the ever growing, ever rich experience.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

TRANSLATED FROM HEGEL'S "PHILOSOPHIE DER RELIGION," BY F. LOUIS SOLDAN.

I have deemed it necessary to make religion in itself the object of philosophical contemplation, and to contribute this inquiry as a special part to the system of philosophy. In order to introduce the subject I shall precede it by an exposition of (A) the diremption of [or antithesis in] consciousness, which awakens that desire whose satisfaction is the task of our science [of religion]; and I shall describe the relation in which this science stands to philosophy and religion in general, and also to the principles of religious consciousness in our own time. Then, after touching upon (B) some preliminary questions which result from these relations of the science, I shall, finally, give (C) a classification of the latter.

We must make clear to ourselves, in the first place, what the object is which presents itself to us in the philosophy of religion, and what our conception of religion is. We know that religion removes us from the limits of time, and that it forms for our consciousness a realm where all the enigmatical problems of the world appear solved, where all contradictions found by musing, pondering thought appear cleared, and all pangs of feeling stilled; it is the realm of eternal truth, rest, and peace. Generally speaking, man is man on account of thought, of concrete thought, or, more particularly, on account of being spirit; from man as spirit proceed the manifold forms of the sciences and arts, the interests of his political life, the relations connected with his Freedom and Will. But all these manifold forms, the whole warp and woof of human relations, activities, joys, everything that man values and esteems, and wherein he seeks his happiness, his glory, and his pride,—all find in the end their centre in religion, in the thought,